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Idaho Transportation Department

Today's News Briefs

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Discussion of an Inland Port

Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle and Pocatello-- just what do these cities have in common?

Three of them have access to significant bodies of water. While Pocatello is lacking an ocean, the Gate City could find itself a future home of an inland port. Here is Doug Andersen.

What began as a pretty routine city council meeting, a mayor, five of six council members and a six o'clock start time quickly became a very exciting environment.

Hooper Knowlton III: "We believe that the current market for distribution and logistics in the United States is changing."

And changing in Pocatello's favor. The airport, economic development, a plan, and a Salt Lake based company who wants to implement that plan by marrying major corporations with the municipal airport.

Hooper Knowlton III: "The opportunities afforded here in Pocatello with two intersections, major railroad facility, nine thousand foot runway which can handle cargo planes, presents an opportunity to avoid the congestion which is affecting the ports of Los Angeles, Long Beach, Oakland, Portland and Seattle Tacoma.

The exclusive agreement allows the Knowlton Group to work with companies who would take advantage of the one-of-a kind confluence of rail, road and air transportation in eastern Idaho.

Hooper Knowlton III: "You can get goods from Shanghai and Hong Kong to the port of Los Angeles and Long Beach in 8-9 days; it then takes a month to six weeks to get it from the port onto rail and onto trucks to get inland."

Getting goods closer to the consumer, that's the goal. With the airport manager looking on, Councilman Ron Frasure made the motion to begin drafting the agreement to lay the groundwork for future growth.

Ron Frasure: "They are talking about spending several thousand dollars, even hundreds of thousands of dollars to help that development."

And without the council fronting taxpayer money. The council was unanimous in their support. The Shoshone Tribes will also have a say on any inland port or maintenance or distribution operation. Frasure says they looked at a couple of other development groups, but decided to proceed with Knowlton.

Hooper Knowlton III: "We have a number of potential tenants who have expressed interest."

Ron Frasure: "We have enough confidence they have enough experience, in fact they have an arm list of experience that they have had developing projects similar to this, not necessarily airport port, but they definitely have experience."

Hooper Knowlton III: "Those tenants are very sophisticated, whether they be Fortune 500 companies or other companies, they want to be assured when they make the kind of investment they are going to make they are going to be in a Class A business park and distribution facility."

The couple dozen taxpayers heard firsthand the initial steps of one company's vision to turn an underutilized airport into a collaborative commercial enterprise.

It is just the first of a very long process, which will draw in federal, state, tribal and regional interests.

A unique opportunity to put Pocatello on the Pacific rim map.